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Article (Unspecified)

Kant, Schiller, and the Idea of a Moral Self

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Wenn sich der Mensch seiner reinen Selbständigkeit bewußt wird, so stößt er alles von sich, was sinnlich ist, und nur durch diese Absonderung von dem Stoffe gelangt er zum Gefühl seiner rationalen Freiheit. Dazu aber wird, weil die Sinnlichkeit hartnäckig und kraftvoll widersteht, von seiner Seite eine merkliche Gewalt und große Anstrengung erfordert, ohne welche es ihm unmöglich wäre, die Begierde von sich zu halten und den nachdrücklich sprechenden Instinkt zum Schweigen zu bringen. ... Unter seiner strengen Zucht wird also die Sinnlichkeit unterdrückt erscheinen, und der innere Widerstand wird sich von außen durch Zwang verraten.[2]

Schiller's vivid description of the forceful suppression of all that belongs to 'sensuous nature' is intended to show the cost involved in seeking to comply with the 'higher demands' of reason. [3] To attain moral and rational freedom human beings have to do battle with 'matter', in order subjugate their 'sensibility' and suppress their natural inclinations, desires, and feelings.[4] The chief target of Schiller's criticism is Kant's ethics.[5] In *On Grace and Dignity*, where the opening quote comes form, and more

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[2] Schiller, Friedrich: "Über Anmut und Würde". Bd 20. *Philosophische Schriften*. Teil I. *Schillers Werke Nationalausgabe*. Ed. Benno von Wiese. Weimar. 1962, 251-308, 280.

[3] "Der Mensch unterdrückt entweder die Forderungen seiner sinnlichen Natur, um sich den höhern Forderungen seiner vernünftigen gemäß zu verhalten", Schiller1962, 280.

[4] "...durch diese Absonderung von dem Stoffe gelangt er zum Gefühl seiner rationalen Freiheit" and "die mit dem Stoffe kämpfende moralische Freiheit", Schiller 1962, 280.

[5] "In der Kantischen Moralphilosophie ist die Idee der Pflicht mit einer Härte vorgetragen, die alle Grazien davon zurückschreckt und einen schwachen Verstand leicht versuchen könnte, auf dem Wege einer finstern und mönchischen Asketik die moralische Vollkommenheit zu suchen" Schiller 1962, 284.

systematically in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller argues that the single-minded pursuit of rational self-mastery is damaging individually and socially.

As is well known, Kant responded to Schiller's criticism in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, claiming that the violent inner struggle Schiller describes can only result from hatred of the moral law and that the true temperament of virtue is 'joyous'.[6] Schiller, on his part, admits that Kant's practical philosophy contains a deeper 'truth' that is at odds with the oppressive picture he criticizes.[7] In recent years, and thanks to a substantial and growing body of interpretative and scholarly work that reveals the richness and nuances of Kant's writings on ethics, it is hard to maintain the once prevailing view that Kantian morality reduces to a concern with duty at the cost of all other aspects of ethical life.[8]

Why then continue to engage with this material? What is there to learn from Schiller's discussion of Kant? Behind the unsubtle rhetoric about the rule of mere reason, Schiller raises an important concern about the subjective experience of adopting a morality based on Kantian principles. On Schiller's view, such experience must be marked by a continuous struggle to suppress nature, because the moral law is a purely rational and categorically commanding law that addresses beings who are natural as

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[6] Religion, AA 06:23, note.

[7] See note 5 above. See too: Schiller, Friedrich: "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in eine Reihe von Briefen*."* Bd. 20. *Philosophische Schriften*. Teil I. *Schillers Werke Nationalausgabe*. Ed. Benno von Wiese. Weimar 1960, 309-412, 310. I use throughout the English translation by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby. Oxford 1982.

[8] See Herman, Barbara: *The Practice of Moral Judgement* Cambridge, Mass. 1993; Baron, Marcia W. *Kantian Ethics Almost without Apology*. Cornell 1995; Louden, Robert B.: *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings*. New York and Oxford 2000. For recent work focusing on the role of anthropology, see Cohen, Alix: *Kant and the Human Sciences: Biology, Anthropology and History*. London 2009 and Frierson, Patrick: *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge 2003. An overview of the relevant literature is given in Varden, Helga: "Kant's Moral Theory and Feminist Ethics: Women, Embodiment, Care Relations, and Systemic Injustice." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism*. Ed. Pieranna Garavaso. Bloomsbury 2018, 459-482. I have pursued a similar line of interpretation, Deligiorgi, K.: *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*. Albany 2006 and *The Scope of Autonomy. Kant and the Morality of Freedom* Oxford 2012. Both books also contain substantial engagement with Schiller's work.

well as rational. Essential for Schiller's conclusion is the account he has of what it takes to follow the law, that is, the mental states and functions that encapsulate the idea of moral self contained in Kant's ethics.[9] On Schiller's reading, to follow the law is to impose a rational principle on inner nature or sensibility. The consequences, Schiller warns, extend beyond the subjective experience of struggle; promoting an ethics that is based on this idea of moral self leads contributes to the impoverishment of moral life and to the maintenance of oppressive social and political systems. My aim here is not to assess these broader claims. I consider the basic point about the moral self of sufficient significance to warrant investigation. Focusing on the fundamental psychological elements and processes to which Kant's theory appeals and on which it depends to have application, I defend an alternative idea of moral self to the one Schiller attributes to Kant.

Section 1 draws on the *Aesthetic Letters* to present Schiller's criticism of Kant. The advantage of focusing on the *Aesthetic Letters* is that this work contains the most systematic presentation of Schiller's critical and positive arguments, which makes it easier to grasp the connections he envisages between moral theory, fundamental psychology, and what we might call moral phenomenology. Section 2 contains the core argument of the paper about Kant's conception of the moral self. On the view defended here, the moral self describes a more benign relation between commanding and commanded that accommodates those elements of human psychology that belong,

[9] The notion of 'moral self' is hardly used in the literature on Kant. One exception is the essay by Wilson, Eric. "Kantian autonomy and the moral self". In *The Review of Metaphysics* 62.2: 2008:355-81. The scarce treatment of the topic in the literature reflects the absence of explicit references to moral selfhood in Kant's writings, despite their wealth of psychological, metaphysical, and anthropological detail. Yet, focus on moral self is needed, as I argue, in order to address properly Schiller's criticisms, that is, to show how it is possible for a being that is natural as well as rational to stand under the command of pure reason without necessarily becoming a battlefield of forces. I choose the term 'self' over 'person' and 'personality', because both of these are technical terms for Kant and for Schiller. More positively, the notion of moral self focuses the discussion on the basic psychology of Kant's ethics. Elsewhere, I have described this basic psychology as 'transcendental psychology' to distinguish it from empirical and using 'transcendental', in the sense employed by H. Rickert, H.: "Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie; Transcendentalpsychologie und Transcentdentallogik." In *Kant-Studien* 14:1-3: 1909:169-228. See Deligiorgi, K.: "Interest and Agency." In *German Idealism Today*. Eds. J. M. Rasmussen, M. Gabriel. J. Rometsch. De Gruyter Verlag 2017, 3-26, 24.

as Schiller puts it, to 'sensuous nature'. Section 3 picks on some of the deeper points raised in Schiller's criticism, which resonate with important aspects of the contemporary reception of Kant's ethics. Broadening the discussion to include this contemporary material helps bring to the foreground central and distinctive commitments of Kant's ethics, which inform his conception of moral self. The paper concludes with a rather speculative argument, presented in section 4, about the philosophical priorities that account for the differences between the Kantian and Schillerian conceptions of the moral self.

1. The damage of reason's rule and how to correct it: Schiller on the moral self.

'Man', Schiller writes, 'can be at odds with himself in two ways: either as savage, when feeling predominates principle; or as barbarian, when principle destroys feeling'.[10] These psychological types stand for fundamental human possibilities that are expressed in and become fixed through moral behavior, as well as social practices and customs. The social and cultural analysis of what Schiller calls 'one-sidedness [*Einseitigkeit*]', provides the wider context for his critical remarks about Kant.[11] This general discussion, which takes up roughly one third of the *Letters*, has the purpose of providing support, mainly by way of contemporary and historical references, to the idea that how human beings organize their lives, individually, socially, and politically must take into account the sorts of beings they are. In that first part of the work, Schiller argues that besides their ability to reason and to act on principles, human beings are desiring, feeling, sensing beings, who can be moved to act in response to the call of their sensuous nature. The remainder of the *Letters* contains Schiller's positive proposals, which start with an ambitious 'transcendental' argument, intended to support the earlier claims, by providing a philosophical account of fundamental human psychology.[12] This account plays both an explanatory role, showing the

[10] "Der Mensch kann sich aber auf eine doppelte Weise entgegen gesetzt sein: Entweder als Wilder, wenn seine Gefühle über seine Grundsätze herrschen; oder als Barbar, wenn seine Grundsätze seine Gefühle zerstören." Schiller 1960 318, 1982, 21.
[11] Schiller 1960, 237, 1982, 41.
[12] " Zwar wird uns dieser transzendentale Weg eine Zeit lang aus dem traulichen Kreis der Erscheinungen und aus der lebendigen Gegenwart der Dinge entfernen" Schiller 1960, 340, 1982, 71.

defects of one-sidedness, and a normative role, justifying an alternative model of moral selfhood to the one Schiller attributes to Kant, one that can support a third possibility, neither savage nor barbarian, but a moral character who might serve as a 'pledge in the sensible world of a morality as yet unseen'.[13]

Although Schiller adopts for his argument elements of the transcendental deduction from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and from the analysis of taste in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, the use to which he puts these Kantian elements is entirely original and serves Schiller's own purposes. Schiller constructs his argument on the basis of a relation between two primitives, 'person' and 'condition'. The 'person' or the 'I' is the human subject. 'Condition' or 'state' is the environment in which human beings find themselves. The relation between person and condition is one of constant interaction; 'we feel, think and will, because outside ourselves something other than ourselves exists too'.[14] Schiller explains the fundamental psychology of this constant interaction by introducing his theory of drives. He starts by identifying two basic drives, the 'formal drive' (*Formtrieb*) and the 'sensuous drive' (*sinnlicher Trieb*). The formal drive has a primarily organizing function, it contributes to categorizing experience, recognizing patterns, forming concepts, and deliberating, including about moral matters.[15] The 'sensuous drive' is a receptive ability it facilitates perception, feeling, attention to particularities of a situation, but it is also involved in practical matters, contributing to turn ideas to reality, by giving content and purpose to human effort. The functional description of the drives motivates the normative argument: when drives are diverted from their proper function or fail to fulfill it, a number of problems arise. So, for example, when the formal drive overpowers and renders impotent the sensuous drive, the result is the sort of conduct Schiller associates with the 'barbarians', a 'compulsion of reason'.[16] By contrast, when the two drives are in harmony a third drive emerges, the 'play-drive' (*Spieltrieb*). The play-drive is awakened by the experience of beauty. The result of the awakening of the play-drive

[13] "...um einen dritten Charakter zu erzeugen, der, ... zu einem sinnlichen Pfand der unsichtbaren Sittlichkeit diente", Schiller 1960, 315, 1982, 15.
[14] "...wir empfinden, denken und wollen, weil außer uns noch etwas anderes ist" Schiller 1960, 341, 1982, 73.
[15] The account of the two drives is a reconstruction of Schiller 1960, 343-9, 1982, 71-89.
[16] "Zwang der Vernunft" Schiller 1960, 354, 1982, 97.

is the attainment of aesthetic state (*Zustand*), which is a state of equilibrium reached when the sensuous and formal drives are in harmony. This state, Schiller argues, is the proper basis for ethical behavior, because it is 'a disposition which contains within it the whole of human nature'.[17] The reason for this is that the aesthetic state represents the continuous, contextually adjustable, and effortless integration of the different elements of the self. The aesthetic state stands for a co-operative idea of moral selfhood, insofar as it describes the 'union and interchange between matter and form' that shows 'the compatibility of our two natures' and 'the possibility of sublimest humanity'.[18] At the basis of the co-operative model is an ideal of human being as a whole in which both rational and natural elements are in harmony.

Schiller's model of drives provides the context for his criticism of Kant's ethics. In Schiller's terminology, the formal drive imposes over the sensuous drive thus precluding the possibility of the emergence of the play drive. The characteristic configuration of the basic psychology of the moral self is impositionist, rather than co-operative. The net result is human self-alienation, instead of harmonious self-integration. Put in different words, the basic problem with Kant's ethics is that it allows no positive role for sensibility in moral action. Sensibility motivates only pathological or heteronomous actions. Therefore, something that on Schiller's account is integral to the self is viewed as alien. At the same time, the effort needed to silence sensibility is indicative of the way reason's rule appears to the moral self: it appears as a bidding from an external higher power that the self is called to implement regardless of cost. Kant's ethics then risks alienating human beings from reason itself. This result is profoundly damaging because it undermines the genuine moral possibilities that Schiller attributes to the human ability to submit to the 'laws of reason [*Vernunftgesetze*]', ultimately perverting what is 'sacred [*heilige*] in man, the moral law [*Moralgesetz*]'.[19] Commitment to these basic Kantian ideas, Schiller

[17] "Ehe wir also noch die Zeugnisse der Erfahrung darüber abgehört haben, sind wir ...zu einem in sich selbst vollendeten Ganzen macht." Schiller 1960, 379, 1982,151.
[18] "...bei dem Genuss der Schönheit oder der ästhetischen Einheit eine wirkliche Vereinigung und Auswechslung der Materie mit der Form und des Leidens mit der Tätigkeit vor sich geht,... mithin die Möglichkeit der erhabensten Menschheit bewiesen." Schiller 1960, 397, 1982, 209.

[19] Schiller 1960, 315, 1982, 11 and 1960, 392, 1982, 179.

argues, requires identifying an alternative to the impositionist model of moral self contained in Kant's ethics.

Besides the general point about self-alienation, Schiller claims a range of concrete advantages for his co-operative model, which are worth considering briefly because they highlight weaknesses in the impositionist model. The primary advantage is enhanced sensitivity to context or 'receptivity [*empfangende Vermögen*]'.[20] Heightened receptivity affects moral cognition, since it allows feelings to alert us to morally pertinent features of our environment and aspects of our moral situation. This cognitive gain in turn affects motivation, since it allows affective elements to play a role in our conduct without diminishing its moral worth. Thanks to the multiform tasks Schiller attributes to the play drive, boundary keeper, harmonizer, balancing,[21] he is able to describe the aesthetic state as a holistic moral ideal that allows fine-tuning the ability to recognize and respond to others in ways that are appropriate to the particulars of the situation. With this fuller picture of Schiller's positive proposals in place, we get a better grasp of the concerns that motivate his criticism and that must be addressed in seeking to present a Kantian response to Schiller.

2. The Kantian Moral Self

Schiller correctly sees that a relation of subjection is internal to law-based morality; the moral law is, among other things, an abstract representation of moral authority and of its fundamentally commanding nature. However, these core elements of Kant's ethics do not justify Schiller's conclusions about the basic psychology of the relation of subjection. In what follows, I argue that the role of the moral command is to direct deliberation with a view to action. Neither the taking nor the following of such direction depends on subduing or silencing part of the self. The relation of subjection describes rather a unifying function. As will emerge towards the end of the section, when I examine Christine Korsgaard's unifying model of agency, and also in the next section, when I consider other unifying models that draw on different ethical

[20] Schiller 1960, 349, 1982, 87.
[21] See Schiller 1960, 350-352 and 375, 1982, 91-3, 95, and 141.

traditions, unification can take a variety of different forms. To distinguish the position I defend here, I call the Kantian model 'directive'.

The argument for the directive model draws on Kant's discussion of action and agency. Characteristic of actions is that they are guided by ideas and have a teleological structure. The two claims are connected: to act is to have a 'practical idea' and to bring about, 'for the sake of for the sake of bringing about, in conformity with this very idea, that which does not exist but which can become real by means of our conduct'.[22] Considered as an observable real, an action is an event-like occurrence, and therefore explicable by reference to efficient causality.[23] However, this perspective is limited, because it cannot accommodate the teleological structure of actions. To distinguish actions from other event-like occurrences, it is necessary to make reference to intentional final causality, in other words, to agency. What I want to argue now is that the dual causal profile of actions has its root in Kant's discussion of fundamental psychology of agency.

The key element in the psychology of agency is the faculty of desire, the *Begehrungsvermögen* or *facultas appetitiva*, which human beings share with other organisms. The faculty of desire is the 'faculty to be, by means of one's representations, the cause of the objects of these representations'.[24] Characteristic of the human exercise of the faculty is the use of concepts, which Kant associates with the ability 'to do or to refrain from doing'.[25] I will return to this briefly. At this point, it is important to note that having a representation does not guarantee that the object of the representation is brought about thereby. It may be that on some particular occasion one fails to do what one sets out to do. To take such failures of execution to

[22] "Hier ist es eine praktische Idee, um das, was nicht da ist, aber durch unser Thun und Lassen wirklich werden kann, und zwar eben dieser Idee gemäß zu Stande zu bringen" GMS, AA 04:437 note; see too MS, AA 06:385.
[23] KrV, A 798/B 826.
[24] "Begehrungsvermögen ist das Vermögen durch seine Vorstellungen Ursache der Gegenstände dieser Vorstellungen zu sein." MS AA , 06: 211. See too the relevant references in KprV, AA 5:21, KU, AA 05:178-9 and 178n, and *Anthropologie*, AA 07:251-282.
[25] "Das Begehrungsvermögen nach Begriffen …heißt ein Vermögen nach Belieben zu thun oder zu lassen." MS AA, 06:213. See too the quote in note 17 and the following discussion of choice or *Willkür*.

account, Kant redefines the causality of desire as 'a *striving (nisus)* to be a *cause* by means of one's representations, is still always causality, at least within the subject, even when he sees the inadequacy of his representations for the effect he envisages'.[26]

Though spread across different texts, the details Kant provides about the causality of desire present a consistently dualistic picture. In the *Groundwork*, he introduces a psychological terminology of incentives and motives, which by the middle of Section II of that work, are given distinct moral valence, motives are objective grounds of volition and incentives subjective ones.[27] Kant employs similar terminology in in the *Lectures on Metaphysics*, where he distinguishes between intellectual' causes or 'motives', and 'sensible' or 'sensitive' causes or impulses or 'stimuli'.[28] Putting their moral significance to one side for the moment, the question is what psychological elements these terms stand for. Customarily the distinction between sensitive and intellectual causes is treated as tracking different practical attitudes and mental states. On this interpretation, the distinction is of limited use, since it cannot deal with calm desires or strong commitments. More importantly, however, it licenses the conclusion that the moral self is one who denies the force of sensitive causes by the application of intellectual force, because it entrenches into the fabric of moral psychology particular instances in which moral obligations are experienced as onerous and their fulfilment is effortful. The net result is support for impositionist conclusions, such as Schiller draws. The interpretation I propose blocks such impositionist conclusions, addresses the structural concerns of Kant's account of agency and explains the moral relevance Kant attributes to the two types of causes; it achieves this by treating the distinction between sensible and intellectual causes as a distinction between efficient and final causes.[29]

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[26]"Eine Begierde als Bestreben (*nisus*) vermittelst seiner Vorstellungen Ursache zu sein ist, wenn das Subject gleich die Unzulänglichkeit der letzteren zur beabsichtigten Wirkung einsieht, doch immer Causalität, wenigstens im Innern desselben." MS AA 06:356.

[27] "Der subjective Grund des Begehrens ist die Triebfeder, der objective des Wollens der Bewegungsgrund" GMS, AA 04: 427-8.

[28] KrV, A 534/B562, MS, AA 6:213. See too the relevant passages in *Dohna* AA 28:677, *Mrongovius* AA 29: 895, *Vigilantius* AA 29:1014.

[29] It would be foolish to deny that Kant himself does not use the distinction to track practical attitudes and mental states, especially in the *Groundwork* where he employs a range of non-technical psychological terms to convey a philosophical point about

Kant associates the human exercise of the faculty of desire with the two-way power of choice or *Willkür*.[30] He argues that choice is free and also sensible, insofar as 'it is **pathologically affected** (through moving-causes of sensibility)'.[31] It is free because sensitive impulses or *stimuli* are not necessitating for human choice.[32] At the same time, choice is affected by such causes (ibid.). These passages, in which Kant focuses on the nature of human choice, its status as free and affected, support an efficient causal interpretation of the factors that are determining for choice, the various 'moving-causes'. However, the passages that focus on the exercise of the power of choice describe its causality as explicitly teleological: 'an *end* is an object of the choice (of a rational being), through the representation of which choice is determined to an action to bring this object about'.[33] The two perspectives can be reconciled. Taken at face value, the claim that human choice is pathologically affected readily translates into a claim about the role of sensible causes in choice. It states that human choice is determined or 'affected' by what people believe, want, feel and so on. With respect to this material, choice is receptive, 'pathological'. At the same time, human choice is free, that is, the presence of these sensible causes is not sufficient to determine the ends one chooses to pursue. These causes need to be *granted* efficiency in order to function as practical ideas. They are granted efficiency, when they are chosen as motives for an action. Complementing the negative thesis about human choice is a positive thesis about intentional final causality. Regarded teleologically, choice is 'consciousness' of our ability to bring something about.[34] The positive thesis

objectivist ethics; see esp. GMS, AA 04: 425-6. The interpretation I propose aims to illuminate the structural psychological assumptions of the moral psychology of Kant's objectivist ethics. It captures Kant's claim in the *Groundwork* that "beim göttlichen Willen kann man sich kein Interesse gedenken. Aber auch der menschliche Wille kann woran ein Interesse nehmen, ohne darum aus Interesse zu handeln." GMS, AA 04:413. I limit the discussion here to the psychology of agency and of the moral self. I do not discuss the metaphysical commitments that the psychology and ethics presuppose. I discuss the metaphysics in Deligiorgi 2017.

[30] "Das Begehrungsvermögen nach Begriffen… heißt es Willkür." MS, AA 06:213

[31] KrV, A 534/B562; see too KprV, AA 05:20

[32] "Die, welche nur durch Neigung (sinnlichen Antrieb, *stimulus*) bestimmbar ist … ie menschliche Willkür ist dagegen eine solche, welche durch Antriebe zwar afficirt, aber nicht bestimmt wird." MS, AA 06:213.

[33] "Zweck ist ein Gegenstand der Willkür (eines vernünftigen Wesens) durch dessen Vorstellung diese zu einer Handlung diesen Gegenstand hervorzubringen b estimmt wird." MS, AA 06:381, see too MS, AA 06:384.

[34]"Sofern es mit dem Bewußtsein des Vermögens seiner Handlung zur Hervorbringung des Objects verbunden ist, heißt es Willkür." MS, AA 06:213.

regards the human ability to set ends.[35] Consciousness of choice is consciousness of this ability. The ability to set ends is the ability to decide which end is worth pursuing and therefore which sensible causes may be granted efficiency.[36] The positive account of choice subjects the quanta of choice to qualitative evaluation; it describes practical deliberation and therefore an intellectual activity. The object of choice is the end for the sake of which one acts, this final cause of the action is its intellectual cause or its motive. Roughly, the content of sensitive causes answers 'why?' questions regarding actions and the content of intellectual causes answers 'what?' questions; questions about worth are answered in the agent's evaluative deliberation. To get the moral self, all that we need to add to this model is the distinctive guidance provided by an objective moral standard.

The interpretation just given explains how Kant's remarks on action, desire and choice cohere and how efficient and final causes can be accommodated in a single model of agency. This matters for the directive interpretation of the moral self. Morally determined choice is choice of ends that conforms with what morality demands. Choice of ends is an evaluative activity. What the previous account of sensible and intellectual causes left out is the details of the evaluative process. These are now filled in with an account of moral deliberation that is guided by the moral 'ought', which provides putative agents with an absolute criterion of worth regarding the evaluation of ends. The ends chosen are brought about or striven for thanks to the sensible causes to which such deliberation grants efficiency. Like other considerations that guide evaluative deliberation, the moral 'ought' has a unifying function, it matches intellectual and sensible causes for the purpose of determining choice. Unlike

[35] See "ein Wesen Vernunft hat … was die größte Summe der Triebfedern, als auch die Mittel, den dadurch bestimmten Zweck zu erreichen, betrifft, anwenden: ohne auch nur die Möglichkeit von so etwas, als das moralische, schlechthin gebietende Gesetz ist, welches sich als selbst und zwar höchste Triebfeder ankündigt, zu ahnen" Religion, AA 06:24, see too MS, AA 06:387.

[36] Wilson makes a similar point in his 'modest' interpretation of Allison's incorporation thesis (Wilson 2008, 357). The interpretation is modest because it does not require that *every* desire be 'incorporated' into a maxim for the agent to act on it, so it allows for non-reflective actions, such as responses to a sudden noise. Wilson's thesis simply states that sensible causes do not come 'pre-packaged as reasons', they become reasons once we ask ourselves whether we ought to act on them (ibid.). Where I differ from Wilson is in the mental states and role I attribute to sensible causes and the role I attribute to intellectual causes.

any other such considerations, however, the moral ought binds the elements of choice unconditionally, this is why it makes sense to say that choice is subject to the moral ought, but not that the moral ought is subject to choice. The fundamental psychological process that describes the moral self then is this unifying function of the moral ought. Because this unity is guidance by the moral ought, this unified moral self can also be described as standing for a 'directive' idea of moral selfhood.

The previous reconstruction of an alternative to the one Schiller attributes to Kant may not suffice to address Schiller's criticisms. This is because suppression of sensuous nature may still be a consequence of the directive model. To address this concern I conclude this section with a brief comparison between the unifying directive account just given and Christine Korsgaard's unifying account of agency. Korsgaard defends a normative account of agency, which aims to show that 'the moral law is the law of self-constitution'.[37] Central to this conclusion is the idea that to be an agent, some standards need to be met: a subject is an agent if they will in accordance to some general principle.[38] This rules out what Korsgaard calls 'particularistic willing', which treats inclinations as reasons.[39] 'If you have particularistic will', Korsgaard argues, 'you are no a person, but a series, a *mere heap*, of unrelated impulses'.[40] From a Schillerian perspective, the insistence on principles as unifiers and the rejection of inclinations represent a threat to sensuous nature and to the ethical possibilities of particularistic willing, Schiller attributes to the sensuous drive. It matters then to show that what leads to this claim in Korsgaard's account is absent from the directive account, even though both are premised on the unity provided by a formal principle of reason.[41]

The exclusion of particularistic willing is the effect of the basic idea of agency Korsgaard defends, when she sets out conscious application of principles as distinguishing agents from non-agents. What drives this basic account, however, is a normatively more fundamental account that sets out what it takes to be good at being

[37] Korsgaard, Christine: *Self-Constitution. Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford 2009, 214.
[38] See Korsgaard 2009, 73.
[39] Korsgaard 2009, 76.
[40] Korsgaard 2009, 76.
[41] Korsgaard 2009, 44.

agent. This more fundamental account supports an ideal of unification in accordance with a universal law, such that it ensures, among other things, stability over time, consistency, and absence of mental conflict.[42] Ideal agency is thus contained in the idea of agency. As Korsgaard explains, 'every rational being must will in accordance with a universal law, *because* it is the task of every rational agent to constitute his agency'.[43] And because human beings 'are *condemned* to choice and action' there is a certain inevitability to the ideal of agency.[44] So Korsgaard is able to conclude that after all, it is as a result of failure to will in accordance to a universal law, that an agent collapses into a mere 'heap of impulses'.[45]

By contrast, while the directive account of moral selfhood expresses specific normative and meta-ethical commitments, it is not a chain in a deductive argument for the value of these commitments. Rather it describes how the human exercise of the power of desire has moral application. The account thus connects the form of moral unification with structural features of human psychology. One consequence of this connection to structural elements of agency is that the directive moral self, as we shall see presently, allows for acknowledgement of the role of aspects of sensuous nature in moral life.

3. Moral selves and moral lives.

The structural elements of agency unified in the moral self have no obvious empirical counterparts therefore unification cannot be used as a criterion for the *a priori* exclusion of particular, morally evaluable, empirical attributes of the self. The directive moral self then shows how an ethics based exclusively on a pure practical law of reason can fit with moral life in the concrete and thrive in it, rather than endanger it. For example, it easy to show how, provided they are part of someone's intentional states, feelings, centrally, moral feeling, and pleasures, such as the

[42] The point about conflict is raised by Sophie Grace Chappell. Following Williams and Nussbaum, Chappell argues that sometimes conflict is more rational than unity; see Chappell, S. G. : "Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity. By Christine M. Korsgaard." In *Philosophy*, 85(3) 2010, 425–432.
[43] Korsgaard 2009, 214, emphasis added
[44] Korsgaard 2009, 1 and 213.
[45] Korsgaard 2009, 213.

pleasures of sociability and feelings of love as 'graces of virtue', can be the sensitive causes of virtuous actions.[46] When Kant claims that joyfulness expresses the *genuine* character of virtue, he is not revisionist about moral worth, he is simply relying on the structural elements of his theory to give a picture of a life morally lived.[47] Similarly, it is easier on the directive model to acknowledge the embodied and temporal existence of human beings, that responsiveness to moral commands is amenable to education and cultivation, including the cultivation of moral feeling.[48] The importance Kant accords to these features of moral life go hand in hand with the view that the moral ought is not reducible to such features.[49]

Showing that an alternative to the impositionist model is available does not suffice to address fully Schiller's criticisms. This is because there remains a concern that Schiller expresses somewhat cryptically where he suggests that there is something fundamentally problematic about reason's introduction of 'the unity of the moral law', explaining that it can pose a threat of the natural variety of life.[50] I shall interpret Schiller's suggestive but obscure remark in light of an argument made by Bernard Williams in a famous paper, in which he takes issue with moralities based on general principles advising that moral judgment be based on strictly considerations.[51] Against this advice, Williams raises two problems. The first concerns the structural importance of character. Any ethics that recommends abstracting 'in moral thought from the identity of the persons',[52] he argues, fails to recognize that unless one cares for the sort of ground projects and desires, which make up individual characters, one

[46] See "Ohne alles moralische Gefühl ist kein Mensch" MS, AA 06:400 and MS, AA 06: 473-4.
[47] "Frägt man nun: welcherlei ist die ästhetische Beschaffenheit, gleichsam das Temperament der Tugend, muthig, mithin fröhlich, oder ängstlich gebeugt und niedergeschlagen?... eine fröhliche Gemüthsstimmung bewirken muß, ohne welche man nie gewiß ist, das Gute auch lieb gewonnen, d. i. es in seine Maxime aufgenommen zu haben." Religion, AA 06:23.
[48] See KprV 05:438
[49] See esp. the discussion of personality in KprV, AA 05:86-7 and MS AA 06:376.
[50] "Wenn also die Vernunft in die physische Gesellschaft ihre moralische Einheit bringt, so darf sie die Mannigfaltigkeit der Natur nicht verletzen." Schiller 1960, 318, 1982, 21-3.
[51] See Williams, B.: "Persons, Character and Morality." In *The Identities of Persons*. Ed. A. Oksenberg Rorty. Berkley and Los Angeles. 1976, 197-216. Williams's target is not Kant but rather Rawls's Kantian position and utilitarian ethics.
[52] Williams 1976, 199.

has no reason to go on with one's life.[53] Individuality at that basic level is indispensable for life. The second problem concerns the moral relevance of differences in character. Williams argues that different life projects reflect in 'concrete detail' differences in character, which are shaped by personal relations and attachments. He illustrates the moral relevance of this point with a thought experiment of a man who, seeing his wife and a stranger imperiled, deliberates, in order to come to a moral conclusion about the permissibility of rescuing his wife. Such conclusion, Williams comments, 'provides the agent with one thought too many'.[54] Schiller's point about the natural variety of moral life can be interpreted, in light of Williams's argument, to be about the threat that the unity of the moral law poses to those necessary attachments to personal projects and to other people, which give substance to one's life and moral commitments. This criticism raises a problem with the very unifying character of the directive moral self. To show where the problem lies and why it is not addressed by the ampliative move, made at the start of this section, by means of which it is shown how the moral self can accommodate the substance of moral life, I present for comparative purposes two unifying accounts that draw on different ethical traditions.

The first account is hierarchical. Harry Frankfurt, whose work shaped subsequent discussion of hierarchical accounts, uses 'personhood' as a normative term.[55] His aim, in the original article that is foundational for this tradition, is to show that to be a person is not just a matter of descriptive metaphysics, of sorting out the characteristics that apply to persons. An account of personhood must explain the normative expectations attached to treatment meted to persons. Building on a basic psychology of desires, Frankfurt argues that people do not just desire, but can also want to have or not have some desires.[56] Choice of desires one wants to have is a matter of 'reflective self-evaluation … manifested in the formation of second-order desires'.[57] Such

[53] Williams 1976, 211.
[54] Williams 1976, 214.
[55] Frankfurt, H.: "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person." In *Journal of Philosophy,* 1971, 14. Frankfurt' s immediate target is Strawson's account of the concept of a person in Strawson, P. F.: *Individuals.* London 1959. In subsequent discussion, hierarchical accounts have proved very influential in thinking about autonomy as a substantive normative goal; see note 57.
[56] Frankfurt 1971, 7.
[57] Frankfurt 1971, 7.

evaluation leads to fundamental formative choices about the desires one wants to be effective for them and so express their will. The choices one makes about the desires one wants to have, irrespective of whether one actually has them, Frankfurt calls 'second-order volitions'.[58] Persons are the product of the unifying function of second-order volitions which express the person's will, in a way that makes it both intelligible and evaluable and goes some way to explain the normativity attached to personhood.[59]

The second account is narrativist. An early proponent of a narrativist account of the self, Alasdair MacIntyre aims to show that narrative unity is essential for recognizing certain kinds of value in human life and specifically for notions of virtue to have application. The notion of a virtue and teleological moral notions such as that of moral flourishing require a concept of self 'whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end'.[60] The sorts of exercises of dispositions that can count as virtues are temporally extended and purposeful activities. In order to detect then virtues in human actions something more complex is needed than arrays of basic actions, such as 'I lift my arm', 'I press the button', 'I turn my head'.[61] What is needed is the temporal and teleological ordering of the agent's intentions by reference to larger purposes, which is exactly what 'narrative history' does.[62]

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[58] Frankfurt 1971, 10.

[59] Since my aim is illustrative rather than argumentative I do not engage with the critical debate surrounding Frankfurt's model, nor with hierarchical model in general. The contemporary literature is vast, though essential classical contributions are G. Watson, G.: "Free Agency." [1975]. In *Agency and Answerability. Selected Essays*, Oxford 2009; Dworkin, G.: "Autonomy and Behavior Control." In *The Hastings Center Report* 6(1): 1976: 23-28; and D. C. Dennett, D. C.: *Elbow Room. The Varieties of Free Will Worth Having*. Oxford 1984, 81-92.

[60] MacIntyre, A.: *After Virtue*. 2nd ed. University of Notre Dame Press 1987, 205. The narrativist literature is equally large and continually expanding in new directions, see Schechtman, M.: *The Constitution of Selves*, Ithaca 1996; and Gibson, J.: (2011) 'Thick Narratives." In *Narrative, Emotion & Insight.* Eds. N. Carroll and J. Gibson University Park, Pennsylvania State 2011.

[61] MacIntyre1987, 203.

[62] MacIntyre1987, 208.

Just like the directive moral self, the hierarchical and narrativist models are unifying accounts. Although they are not morally unifying accounts, they do not serve purely descriptive aims. On the contrary, they are explicitly formulated to support normative claims: in the case of the hierarchical model, a normative conception of the person which can support ethical commitments to personal autonomy and personal responsibility; in the case of the narrativist model, a normative conception of the self that can support the application of ethical notions of virtue and of flourishing in moral appraisal. The difference with the directive idea of the moral self lies in how the hierarchical and narrativist accounts fulfill their unifying function and normative aims. They do so by remaining rooted in the substance of moral life. Their unifying principles are internal to the substance of moral life, and therefore, they have no trouble accommodating its natural variety, which consists, among other things, in the details of character, personal attachments and commitments Williams describes. By contrast, what fulfills the unifying function on the directive account is an *a priori* law of reason. The threat of unity, which Schiller identifies with a morality of reason, is present whenever particular contents are evaluated morally by a law that because of its *a priori* ground claims authority over all rational beings and therefore can address human individuals *qua* rational beings on a par with any other rational beings in existence. This critical point is not about whether feelings can be sensitive causes, but rather, about the implications of unification for decisions on some motives, that is, some ends, which may appear perverse or overlabored.

In the final section, I want to present a line of argument that explains why Kant does not recognize this threat and, by extension, why the unifying function is not given over to some higher or better self, but rather to a principle of pure rational origin.

4. An utmost necessity

In the *Groundwork*, Kant states that there is an 'utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical and that belongs to anthropology'.[63] The object of such pure moral

[63] "...alle Moralphilosophie beruht gänzlich auf ihrem reinen Teil, und, auf den Menschen angewandt, entlehnt sie nicht das mindeste von der Kenntnis desselben

philosophy is also pure, in the sense of cleansed of everything empirical. The reason Kant gives in the *Metaphysics of Morals* is that the teachings of morality 'command for everyone, without taking account of his inclinations, merely because and insofar as he is free and has practical reason'.[64] So *a priori* treatment fits the nature of moral commands, their necessity and scope, which is beyond the means of empirical enquiries.

At the same time, Kant also makes the following comment:

> If one asks . . . what pure morality really is, by which as the touchstone, the moral import of each action must be tested, I must confess that only philosophers can put the decision of this question in doubt. For by common sense it is long since decided, not by abstract, general formulas but rather by habitual use, like the difference between the right and the left hand.[65]

The philosophically untutored common sense invoked in this passage suggests that moral life, which includes a habitual and almost automatic sense of right and wrong, is the basis on which moral argument is conducted. How can the rootedness of ethical knowledge be reconciled with the task of a pure moral philosophy? The answer seems to be that pure moral philosophy expresses the deep, possibly unarticulated, convictions about the nature of right and wrong that sustain ordinary moral interactions. Interpreted along those lines, the passage suggests that sustained reflection on right and wrong, including philosophical reflection, is dependent on the existence and persistence of moral life.[66] This does not mean that philosophy is anthropology, it means that *a priori* moral enquiry uses concepts that have application in moral life. But this connection to moral life, I want to suggest now, can be the source of a certain kind of moral anxiety about whether moral concepts have a real life and if not, whether they are real at all. Prompted by a view of moral life as disorderly and vanishing, this anxiety can turn to a sort of moral nihilism.

(Anthropologie), sondern gibt ihm als vernünftigem Wesen Gesetze a priori" GMS, AA 04:389.

[64] "Allein mit den Lehren der Sittlichkeit ist es anders bewandt. Sie gebieten für jedermann, ohne Rücksicht auf seine Neigungen zu nehmen, blos weil und sofern er frei ist und praktische Vernunft hat." MS, AA 06:216.

[65] "Wenn man aber frägt … längst entschieden." KprV, AA 05:155.

[66] See too Deligiorgi 2012, chap.2.

One place where Kant mentions this anxiety is in the conclusion of the "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History" where he describes how a thinking person contemplating the ills that oppress humanity doubts providence and succumbs to a 'sorrow[*Kummer*]' that can become 'moral corruption [*Sittendverderbniss*]'.[67] In a passage from the third *Critique*, Kant strikes a similar tone though this time he describes someone who is steadfast in the face injustice. He expresses wonder at how 'a righteous man (like Spinoza)' who does not believe in God and has no expectations of future life can cope with the 'deceit, violence and envy' that surround him.[68] Such a man, Kant elaborates, has to face 'all the evils of poverty, illness, and untimely death, just like all the other animals on earth ... until one wide grave engulfs them all together'; his righteousness and honesty matters not at all as he is thrown together with everyone else to 'the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter from whence they were drawn'.[69] The passage is especially striking because, while it describes someone remains strong in adversity, it conveys anxiety about the moral effects of such experiences, hinting at the loss of moral faith. In a third passage, which speaks to the same concerns, Kant argues for the need to hold onto what practical reason commands even 'if the complete realization of this objective always remains a pious wish'.[70] Kant insists that we 'are certainly not deceiving ourselves in adopting the maxim of working incessantly toward it' arguing that were we 'to admit that the moral law within us is itself deceptive would call forth in us the wish, which arouses our abhorrence, rather to be rid of all reason and to regard ourselves as thrown by one's principles into the same mechanism of nature as all the other species of animals'.[71] While the immediate contexts of the three quotes are different, they all point at a moral worry that shows the vulnerability to which are liable those who seek to do the right thing.

The problem that loss of moral faith represents is very different to the problem with which Schiller deals in the *Aesthetic Letters*. Schiller describes how individuals and

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[67] MAM, AA 08:120-1.
[68] "Wir können also einen rechtschaffenen Mann (wie etwa den Spinoza) ...in den Schlund des zwecklosen Chaos der Materie, zurück wirft, aus dem sie gezogen waren." KU AA 05:452.
[69] Ibid.
[70] "Und wenn das letztere... in einen gleichen Mechanism der Natur geworfen anzusehen." MS, 06:354-5.
[71] Ibid.

their social and political systems can be seriously adrift. Yet he also argues that within that environment the resources can be found to make right what goes wrong. These resources take the form of an experience. The experience of beauty combines exemplarity with sensible awareness that affects human character at a fundamental level. What Schiller recognizes as moral threats are resisted with what is available within the life that is threatened. If we want guidance, Schiller seems to be saying, we had better look at a particular life, a particular shape of goodness, and what our love for it, our attraction to it, can teach us about *the* form of goodness and about how to regain our moral integrity. Only whatever is morally alive around us can ensure the persistence of morality and hopes of moral flourishing even at times 'of deep degradation'.[72]

But there is another kind of moral worry, which can lead to the loss of one's moral compass, and indeed to generalized doubt about whether there is any such thing as a moral true North. I do not think that Schiller recognises the prospect of such a loss. By contrast, I think that the passages cited earlier express just this kind of moral worry. The worry, and the anxiety it generates, is not about the confronting difficult moral situations, of not knowing how to proceed, or of being led astray by bad decisions and actions. Rather it is the suspicion that one's moral feeling has no real object sustaining it. The train of thought that leads the righteous to the corruption of nihilism can be reconstructed as follows: based on observation, there are no signs of a secure connection between human life and moral goodness, so maybe there is no such connection, and if there is no such connection, maybe there is no moral goodness.

In light of this problem, the utmost need moral philosophy fulfills is for an account that shows how an objective good -a good without qualification- is realizable in willing that is guided by an unconditional moral command, that is, willing guided by a law that has force over all rational beings. The reality of moral law does not depend on its instantiation in particular forms of life. Establishing the ontological independence of the moral law from moral life addresses the empirically generated anxiety of the right thinking man. It does not and cannot address theoretical doubt about the nature of moral law given in the theory. On the other hand, by presenting morality as law-based, the theory puts subordinate individual human subjects in a

[72] Schiller 1960, 330, 1982, 47.

practical relation of commonality with all other beings that are equally subject to the law. What is lost in terms of natural variety of moral life is gained through this relation commonality, which describes an expansive and dynamic idea of moral citizenship. This idea of morality as essentially other regarding and action guiding can serve as a corrective to the vision of moral life the righteous get from their observations.

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